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Government Officials Upset By Book That May Be a Hoax

By RICHARD DUDMAN
A Washington Correspondent of
the Post-Dispatch

WASHINGTON, Nov. 8 — Government officials are upset over a new book that revives the old Marxist charge that the United States needs war to continue operating successfully.

Some of those who have examined advance copies expect critics of American policies to use the book as anti-American propaganda, to feed the suspicions of naive and gullible persons.

The book, which purports to be a "leaked" copy of an official government report, is titled, "Report From Iron Mountain: On the Possibility and Desirability of Peace."

Its conclusion is that war and war preparations are essential to economic, political and cultural stability, and that world peace, if it could be achieved, would be a catastrophe.

Officials of government agencies that could be expected to know of any such report say they consider the book a hoax.

Unidentified Agency

Ostensibly, the "report" was written by a 15-man "citizens' panel" assigned by an unidentified government agency to conduct a two-year study.

A foreword by Leonard C. Lewin, a New York Times science writer, says that "John Doe," a professor of social science at a large midwestern university and a member of the panel, secretly passed him a copy last winter.

A spokesman for the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency said copies of the book have been studied by officials there. He made this statement:

"To our knowledge, no such 'special study group' has ever existed; and we would find it difficult to imagine any serious study group arriving at such extraordinary conclusions."

No Comment from CIA

A spokesman for the Central Intelligence Agency said that the CIA would have no comment for publication. He said that the CIA had adopted a policy of avoiding public comment on anything.

Officials of various agencies said privately that they considered the "report" a clever piece of writing, couched in perfect "bureaucratese." They noted that the formula was used as a vehicle for a series of charges that the United States health and poverty programs were inadequate, and for criticisms of selective service, alleged repression of minority groups, pollution and other aspects of American life.

"It looks like a 'liberal' attack on the Johnson Administration," said one official.

The "report" suggests a search for alternatives to war, such as a mammoth space program aimed at achieving unattainable goals and spurred on by fear of extraterrestrial invasion and the inauguration of a new, sophisticated form of slavery.

In the foreword, Lewin says the unidentified authors, "it is important to improve the war system to make it work better. For example, they suggest that the

Government determine "minimum and optimum levels of destruction of life, property and natural resources prerequisite to the credibility of external threat essential to the political and motivational functions."

Publication Nov. 30

Dial Press, which will publish the book Nov. 30, says that it assumes the report is authentic. Esquire magazine is publishing a 28,000-word condensation in its December issue.

Lewin, whose articles have been published in The Nation, The New York Times Magazine and The Columbia Journalism Review, summarizes the basic conclusion of the "report" in these words:

"Lasting peace, while not theoretically impossible, is probably unattainable; even if it could be achieved it would almost certainly not be in the best interests of a stable society to achieve it . . .

"War fills certain functions essential to the stability of our society; until other ways of filling them are developed, the war system must be maintained — and improved in effectiveness."

War Called Balance

The "report" argues that the "war system" provides a balance wheel to take up the slack of overproduction, a massive social welfare program through the armed forces, and a method for unifying the nation and exerting social control.

It says the war system is not as effective as it should be, because it "continues to operate largely on a 'laissez-faire' basis." For example, there has been no serious effort to determine optimum levels of arms production, "correlation factors between draft recruitment policies and measurable social dissidence," or "optimum cyclical frequency of 'shooting' wars under varying circumstances of historical relationship."

In the foreword, Lewin calls the report "an outrageous document," but also "a challenging effort to define an enormous problem." He says the American people have a right to know to what extent the authors' "assumptions of social necessity are shared by the decision-makers in our government."

The title comes from a place he calls "Iron Mountain," near Hudson, N.Y., described as an atom-proof emergency headquarters for certain large corporations. The study group is supposed to have met there.

P. DOE, JOHN

P. LEWIN, LEONARD C.

P. DUDMAN, RICHARD

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